WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Production of Natural Rubber

1241. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the production of Natural Rubber is surplus in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the price of Natural Rubber has gone down since 1996; and if so, the details of downfall of the price;

(d) whether it is a fact that Advance licences have been issued for the import of Natural Rubber for the last two years;

(e) if so, the details thereof, and

(f) the reasons for issuing Advance Licences for import inspite of huge surplus in the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In April, 1998, about 49,000 tonnes of Natural rubber was surplus over and above the demand.

(c) The monthly average price of RSS-IV Grade of rubber which stood at Rs. 5385 per quintal inJune 1996 came down to Rs. 2695 per quintal in January, 1999.

(d) and (e) During 1996-97 and 1997-98, a quantity of 19770 MTs and 29,389 MTs of Natural Rubber respectively has been imported under Advance Licence for re-export purposes.

(f) Import of raw materials, under Advance Licenes is permitted under the EXIM Policy for the purpose of promoting exports and to make them internationally competitive. However, in order to help the rubber growers, the Govt. of India with effect from 20.2.99 has withdrawn the facility of import of natural rubber under Advance Lincence.

Withdrawal of Import Duty on Sri Lankan Tea

1242. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Assam State Governments have protested against withdrawal of import duty on Sri Lankan tea;

(b) the issues raised by them in their representations;

(c) the impact on the Indian tea industry as a result of the withdrawal of the import duty; and

(d) the stps taken by Government to protect the Indian tea industry?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE): (a) to (d) Representations have been received from the State Governments of West Bengal and Assam on the issue of granting traiff concessions on import of tea from Sri Lanka.

As per the Free Trade Agreement signed between India and Sri Lanka on 28th December, 1998, the various lists for granting tariff concessions are to be finalised within 60 days from the date of signing of the Agreement. The finalisation of these lists is presently under consideration. The representations received in this regard will be taken into consideration while finalising the lists.

Concept of E-Commerce

1243. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to boost trade via-commerce;

(b) if so, what are the details of such plan;

(c) whether any dialogue has taken place with government of Andhra Pradesh to take the initiative in this new policy;